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L E T T E R S

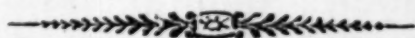
OF THE LATE

Rev. Mr. FLETCHER,

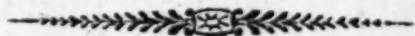
VICAR OF MADELEY, SHROPSHIRE.

TO WHICH IS ADDED, HIS

HEADS OF SELF-EXAMINATION.



Being dead, yet speaketh. HEB. xi. 4.



D U B L I N :

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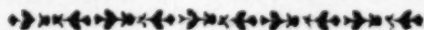
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L E T T E R S

OF THE LATE

Rev. Mr. FLETCHER.



TO THE REV. MR. WESLEY.

(Asking Advice concerning his entering into Holy Orders.)

Rev. Sir,

Nov. 24, 1756.

AS I look on you as my spiritual Guide, and cannot doubt of your patience to hear, and your experience to answer a serious question proposed by any of your people, I freely lay my case before you. Since the first time I began to feel the love of God shed abroad in my heart, which was, I think, when seven years of age, I resolved to give myself up to Him and the service of his Church, if ever I was fit for it; but the corruption which is in the world, and that which was in my heart, soon weakened, if not erased those first characters that Grace had wrote upon my heart. However, I went through my studies with a design of go-

ing into Orders, but afterwards upon serious reflections, feeling I was unequal for so great a burden, and disgusted by the necessity I should be under to subscribe to the doctrine of Predestination*, I yielded to the desire of my friends who would have me go into the army; but just before I quite engaged into a military employment I met with such disappointments as occasioned my coming to England. Here I was called outwardly three times to go into Orders; but upon praying to God that if those Calls were not from Him they might come to nothing, something always blasted the designs of my friends, in which I have often admired the goodness of God, who has so many times hindered me from rushing into that important employment as a horse does into the battle: but I never was more thankful for this favour than since I heard the Gospel preached in its purity. Before I had been afraid, but then I trembled to meddle with Holy Things, and resolved to work out my salvation privately, without engaging into a way of life which required so much more grace and gifts than I was conscious to have: but yet from time to time I felt warm and strong desires to cast myself and all my inability upon the Lord, if I should be called any more, as knowing that he could help me and shew his strength in my weakness; and from time to time those desires were encreased by some little success that attended my exhortations and letters to my friends.

I think

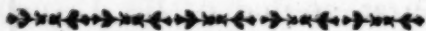
* All the Protestant Divines in Switzerland must do this.

I think it necessary to let you know, Sir, my Patron often desired me to take Orders, and said that he would soon help me to a Living; to which I coldly answered, I was not fit, and that besides I did not know how to get a title. The thing was in that state when about six weeks ago a Gentleman I hardly knew, offered me a Living which in all probability will be vacant very soon; and a Clergyman that I never spoke to, gave me of his own accord, the title of Curate to one of his Livings. Now, Sir, the question which I beg you to decide is, whether I must and can make use of that title to try to go into Orders? For as for the Living, were it vacant, I have no mind to it, because I think I could preach with more fruit in my country and in my own tongue. I am in suspense: for on the one side my heart tells me I must try, and it tells me so whenever I feel any degree of the Love of God and man: but on the other, when I examine whether I am fit for it, I so plainly see my want of gifts, and especially of that soul of all the labours of a Minister of the Gospel, Love, continual, universal, flaming Love, that my confidence disappears, I accuse myself of pride, to dare to entertain the desire of supporting one day the Ark of the Lord, and I conclude that an extraordinary punishment will sooner or later overtake my rashness. As I am in both these frames successively, I must own Sir, I do not see plainly which of the two ways before me I can take with safety, and I shall be glad to be ruled by you, because I trust

God will direct you in giving me the advice you think will best conduce to his glory, the only thing I would have in view in this affair. I know how precious is your time, I desire no long answer, *persist* or *forbear* will satisfy and influence,

Sir,

Your unworthy Servant,
JOHN FLETCHER.



L E T T E R II.

(To the same.)

Rev. Sir,

London, May 26, 1757.

IF I did not write to you before Mrs. Wesley had asked me, 'tis not that I wanted a remembrancer within, but rather an encourager without. There is generally upon my heart such a sense of my unworthiness, that I dare hardly open my mouth before a child of God sometimes, and think it is an unspeakable honour to stand before one who has recovered something of the image of God, or sincerely seeks after it. Is it possible that such a sinful worm as me should have the privilege to converse with one, whose soul is besprinkled with the blood of my Lord? The thought amazes—confounds me, and fills my eyes with tears of humble joy. Judge then at what distance I must see myself from you, if I am so much be-

low

low the least of your children; and whether a remembrancer within suffices to make me presume to write to one, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear. I rejoice that you find every where an increase of praying souls. I doubt not but the prayer of the just has great power with God; but I cannot believe that it should hinder the fulfilling of Christ's gracious promises to his Church. He must and will certainly come at the time appointed, for he is not slack as some men count slackness; and though he would have all come to repentance, yet he has not forgot to be true and just. Only he will come with more mercy, and will increase the light that shall be at evening-tide, according to his promise in Zech. xiv. 7. I should rather think that the visions are not yet plainly disclosed, and that the day and year in which the Lord will begin to make bare his arm openly, is still concealed from us. I must say concerning Mr. Walsh, as he said once to me, concerning God, I wish I could attend him every where as Elisha attended E'ias. But since the will of God calls me from him, I must submit and drink the cup prepared for me. I have not seen him, unless for a few moments, three or four times before divine service. We must meet at the throne of grace, or meet but seldom. O when will the communion of saints be compleat? Lord hasten the time, and let me have a place among them that love thee, and love one another in sincerity!

I set

mouths in the dust, and echo back the solemn sound, Holy! holy! holy! Let us plunge ourselves in that ocean of purity. Let us try to fathom the depths of divine mercy; and convinced of the impossibility of such an attempt, let us lose ourselves in them. Let us be comprehended by God, if we cannot comprehend him. Let us be supremely happy in God. Let the intenseness of our happiness border upon misery, because we can make him no return. Let our head become waters, and our eyes a fountain of *tears—tears* of humble repentance, of solemn joy, of silent admiration, of exalted adoration, of raptured desires, of inflamed transports, of speechless awe! My God and my all!—Your God and your all! Our God and our all! Praise him; and with our souls blended into one by divine love, *let us with one mouth glorify the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; our Father, who is over all, through all and in us all.* I charge you before the Lord Jesus who *giveth life and more abundant life*: I intreat by all the actings of faith, the stretchings of hope, the flames of love you have ever felt, sink to greater depths of self-abasing repentance, rise to greater heights of Christ exalting joy. And let him who *is able to do exceeding abundantly more than you can ask or think*, carry on, and fulfil in you the work of faith with power; *with that power whereby he subdueth all things unto himself.* Be stedfast in hope, unmoveable in patience and love, always abounding in the outward

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You are freed from a dreadful snare, even from Dives's portion in this world. May you know the happiness attending your state! It is a mercy to be drove to the throne of grace even by bodily want, and to live in dependance on divine mercy even for a morsel of bread.

I have been sowing the seed that the Lord hath given both in Bath and Bristol, and I hope your prayers have not been lost upon me as a minister; for though I have not been able to discharge my office as I would, the Lord hath in some measure stood by me, and over-ruled my foolishness and helplessness. I am much supported by the thought that you bear me upon your hearts, and that when you come to the throne of grace to beg a blessing for me in the name of Jesus, the Lord doth in no wise cast you out. With regard to the state of my soul, I find, blessed be God, that as my day is, so is my strength to travel on, without minding much either good or bad report.

My absence from you answers two good ends in regard of me: I feel more my insufficiency, and the need of being daily ordained of Christ to preach his gospel; and I shall value the more the worth of my privilege with you, please God I return safely to you. I had yesterday a most advantageous offer made me of going free cost to my own country, (i. e. France.) to see my mother, brothers, and sisters in the flesh, whom I have not seen for near eighteen years; but I find my relations in the spirit are nearer

nearer and dearer to me than my relations in the flesh. I have therefore refused the kind offer, that I might return among you, and be comforted by the mutual faith of you and me.

I hope, my dear brethren, that you improve much under the ministry of that faithful servant of God Mr. B——, whom Providence blesses you with. Make haste to gather the honey of knowledge and grace as it drops from his lips, and may I find the hive of your heart so full of it at my return, that I may share with you in the heavenly store. In order to this, intreat the Lord to stir up your hunger and thirst after Jesus' flesh and blood, and to increase your desire for the sincere milk of the word. When people are hungry they will find time to go to their meals ; and a good appetite doth not think that a meal a day is too much. As you go to spiritual meals forget not to pray all the way, and to feast your souls in hopes of hearing some good news from heaven, and from Jesus, the faithful loving friend which you have there ; and when you return home, be sure to carry the unsearchable riches of Jesus's dying and rising love to your houses, in the vessel of a believing heart. Let light be attended with warmth of love. Be not you satisfied in knowing the way to heaven, but walk in it immediately, constantly, and joyfully. Be all thoroughly in earnest. You may impose upon your brethren by a formal attendance on the means of grace, but you cannot deceive the

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the searcher of hearts. Let him then see your hearts struggling towards him, and if you fall through heaviness, sloth, or unbelief, do not you make a bad matter worse by continuing hopeless in the ditch of sin and guilt. Up and away to the fountain of Jesus' blood, it will not only wash away the guilt of past sins, but strengthen you to trample all iniquity under foot for the time to come. Never forget that the soul of the diligent shall be made fat, and that the Lord will spue the lukewarm out of his mouth. Get therefore that love which makes you diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.

You know the way to get this love is, 1st. To consider the mercy of God; 2dly, to be frequently, if not continually, plying this faith with all the attention of your minds, and fervour of your hearts, "Lord, I am lost, but Christ hath died!" 3dly, to try actually to love as you can, by setting your affections on Christ whom you see not, and for his sake, on your brethren whom you see; 4thly, to use much private prayer for yourselves and others, and to try to keep up communion with God, and with your absent brethren.

I beg, in order to this, that you will not neglect the assembling of yourselves together as the manner of some is; and when you meet in society, be neither backward nor forward to speak; esteem yourselves every one the meanest

in the company, be glad to sit at the feet of the lowest. If you are tempted against any one, yield not to the temptation, and pray for much of that love which hopeth all things, and puts the best constructions even upon the worst of things. I beg for Christ's sake I may find no division and no offence among you at my return. If there be any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels of mercy, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord and of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory, but in lowliness of mind, let each esteem the others better than himself. I earnestly beg the continuance of your prayers for me, both as a minister, and as your companion in tribulation; as in particular, that the Lord would keep me from hurting his cause in these parts, and that when Providence shall bring me back among you, which I hope will be this day fortnight, I may be thoroughly furnished for every good word and work. That the blessing of God in Christ Jesus, may crown all your hearts and your meetings, is the earnest prayer of, my very dear brethren,

Your unworthy servant in the gospel
of our common Lord,

JOHN FLETCHER.

P. S. I had not time to finish this letter yesterday, being called upon to preach in a market town in the neighbourhood. The dragon shewed

you, nevertheless I bear patiently this bodily separation for three reasons.

I. The variety of more faithful and abler ministers which you have during my absence, is more likely to be serviceable to you than my presence among you, and I would always prefer your profit to my satisfaction.

II. I hope Providence will give me those opportunities of conversing and praying with a greater variety of experienced christians, which will tend to mine own improvement, and I trust in the end, to yours.

III. I flatter myself, that after some weeks absence, my ministry will be recommended by the advantage of novelty, which (the more the pity) goes farther with some than the word itself. In the mean time, I shall give you some advice, which it may be, will prove both suitable and serviceable to you.

I. ENDEAVOUR to improve daily under the ministry that Providence blesses you with. Be careful to attend it with diligence, faith, and prayer. Would it not be a great shame, if when ministers come thirty or forty miles off to offer you peace and pardon, strength and comfort, in the name of God, any of you should slight the glorious message, or hear it as if it was nothing to you, and as if you heard it not? See then, that you never come from a sermon, without
being

being more deeply convinced of sin and righteousness. In order to this,

2. Use much prayer before you go to church. Consider that your next appearance there, may be in a coffin; and intreat the Lord to give you now so to hunger and thirst after righteousness, that you may be filled therewith. Hungry people never go fasting from a feast. Call to mind the text I preached from the last Sunday but one, before I left you. *Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisy, and envies, and all evil-speaking; as new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby,* 1 Pet. 2. 1.

3. When you are under the word, beware of sitting as judges, and not like criminals. Many judge of the manner, matter, voice, or person of the preacher. You perhaps judge all the congregation, when you should judge yourselves guilty of eternal death, and yet worthy of eternal life, through the worthiness of him, who stood and was condemned at Pilate's bar for you. The moment you have done crying to God as guilty, or thanking Christ as reprieved criminals, you have reason to conclude, that this advice is levelled at you.

4. When you have been at a means of grace, and do not find yourselves sensibly quickened, let it be matter of deep humiliation to you. For want of repenting of their unbelief, and hardness

of heart, some get into a habit of deadness and indolence, so that they come to be as insensible, and as little ashamed of themselves for it, as stones.

5. Beware of the inconsistent behaviour of those, who complain that they are full of wandering in the evening under the word, when they have suffered their minds to wander from Christ all the day long. O! get acquainted with him, that you may walk in him, and with him. Whatsoever you do or say, especially in the things of God, do or say it, as if Christ was before, behind, and on each side of you. Indeed he is so, whether you consider it or not; for when he visibly appeared on earth, he called himself the Son of Man which is in heaven; how much more then is he present on earth, now, that he makes his immediate appearance in heaven? Make conscience then, to maintain a sense of his blessed presence all the day long, and all the day long you will have a continual feast; for can you conceive any thing more delightful, than to be always at the fountain of love, peace, beauty and joy; at the spring of power, wisdom, goodness and truth? Can there be a purer, and more melting happiness, than to be with the best of fathers, the kindest of brothers, the most generous of benefactors, and the tenderest of husbands? Now Jesus is all this, and much more to the believing soul. O! believe my friends, believe in Jesus now, through a continual now; and until you find you can thus believe,

lieve, mourn over your unbelieving heart; drag it to him as you can; think of the efficacy of his blood shed for the ungodly, and wait for the spirit of faith from on high.

6. Some of you wonder why you can't believe; why you cannot see Jesus with the eye of your mind, and delight in him with the affections of your heart. I apprehend the reason to be one of these, or perhaps altogether.

I. You are not poor, lost, undone, helpless, despairing sinners in yourselves. You indulge spiritual and refined self-righteousness; you are not yet dead to the law, and quite slain by the commandment. Now the kingdom of heaven belongs to none but the poor in spirit; Jesus came to save none but the lost. What wonder then, if Jesus is little to you, and if you do not live in his kingdom of peace, righteousness, and joy in the Holy Ghost?

II. Perhaps you spend your time in curious reasonings, instead of casting yourselves as forlorn sinners at Christ's feet, leaving it to him to bless you, when, and in the manner and degree he pleases. Know that he is the wise and sovereign God, and that it is your duty to lie before him as clay, as fools, as sinful nothings.

III. Perhaps also, some of you wilfully keep idols of one kind or other: you indulge some sin against light and knowledge, and it is neither matter of humiliation nor confession to you.

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The love of praise, that of the world, that of money, and that of sensual gratifications, when not lamented, are as implacable enemies to Christ, as Judas and Herod. How can ye believe, seeing ye seek the honour that cometh from men? Hew then your Agags in pieces before the Lord; run from your Delilahs to Jesus resolutely; cut off the right hand, and pluck out the right eye that offends you: "Come out from among them, and be separate, saith the Lord, and I will receive you." Nevertheless, when you strive, take care not to make yourself a righteousness of your striving; remember that justifying righteousness is finished and brought in, and that your goodness can no more add to it than your sins diminish it. Shout then, "the Lord your righteousness;" and if you are undone sinners, humbly and yet boldly say, "in the Lord have I righteousness and strength."

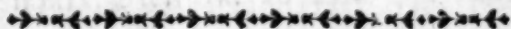
7. When I was in London, I endeavoured to make the best of my time; that is to say, to hear, receive, and practise the word. Accordingly, I went to Mr. Whitfield's tabernacle, and heard him give his society a most sweet exhortation upon love. He began by observing that when the apostle St. John was old, and past walking and preaching, he would not forsake the assembling himself with the brethren, as the manner of too many is upon little or no pretences at all. On the contrary, he got himself carried to their meeting, and with his last thread of voice, preached to them his final sermon
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made up of this one sentence, “ My little children love one another.” I wish, I pray, I earnestly beseech you to follow that evangelical, apostolical advice ; and till God makes you all little children, little in your own eyes, and simple as little children ; give me leave to say, my dear brethren, love one another, and of course, judge not, provoke not, be not shy of one another, but bear ye one another’s burthens, and so fulfil the law of Christ ; yea, bear with one another’s infirmities, and do not easily cast off any one, no not for sin, except it be obstinately persisted in.

My sheet is full, and so is my heart of good wishes for, and strong longing after you all. I have just room to tell you, I hope to be with you in three or four weeks time. O let me have the comfort of finding you all believing and loving. Farewell, my dear brethren! The blessing of God be with you all; this is the earnest desire of,

Your unworthy minister,

JOHN FLETCHER.



L E T T E R VI.

TO MR. IRELAND.

My very dear Friend,

July, 1766.

YOUR absence made me postpone thanking
you for all the love and kindness you shewed
me

me when at Bristol, and to lay me under still greater obligations, you have sent me a hamper full of wine, and broad cloth, as if it was not enough to adorn and cover the outside, but you must also warm and nourish the inside of the body.

To this you have added a kind but melancholy letter from Dover.—Melancholy I say as well as kind—by the account of the worldliness of our poor Protestant brethren abroad—and of the little hopes you have of seeing your daughter again.—My reason for not answering immediately, was the hope of sending by some friends going to Bristol.—And now I have the opportunity of telling you without further delay, that you should have a little mercy on your friends, in not loading them with such burdens of beneficence.—How would you like to be loaded with kindnesses you could not return, were it not for a little of that grace which makes us not only willing but happy to be nothing, to be obliged and dependant, your present would make me quite miserable. But the mountains of divine mercy which press down my soul, have enured me to bear the hills of brotherly kindness.—I submit to be cloathed and nourished by you, as your servants, without having the happiness of serving you. To yield to this is as hard to friendship, as to submit to be saved by free grace, without one scrap of our own righteousness. However we are allowed both in religion and and friendship to ease ourselves by thanks and prayers,

prayers, till we have an opportunity of doing it by actions. I thank you then my dear friend, and pray to God that you may receive his benefits as I do yours.—Your broad cloth can lap me round two or three times, but the mantle of Divine Love, the precious fine robe of Jesu's Righteousness can cover your soul a thousand times. The cloth fine and good as it is, will not keep out a hard shower, but that garment of Salvation will keep out even a shower of fire and brimstone. Your cloth will wear out, but that fine linen, the righteousness of the saints, will appear with a finer lustre the more it is worn. The moth may fret your present, or the taylor spoil it in cutting, but the present which Jesus hath made you is out of the reach of the spoiler, and ready for present wear, nor is there any fear of cutting it out wrong, for it is seamless, woven from the top throughout, with the white unbroken warp of thirty-three years perfect obedience, and the red weft of his agony and suffering even unto death. Now my dear friend, let me beseech you to accept of this heavenly present, as I accept of your earthly one. I did not send you one farthing to purchase it, it came unsought, unasked, unexpected, as the seed of the woman, and it came just as I was sending a taylor to buy me some cloth for a new coat; immediately I stopt him, and I hope when you next see me, it will be in the present. Now let Jesus see you in his. Walk in white, adorn his gospel, while he beautifies you with the garment of salvation.—Accept it freely, wear no more
the

the old rusty coat of nature and self righteousness—send no more to have it patched, make your boast of an unbought suit, and love to wear the livery of Jesus. You will then love to do his work, it will be your meat and drink to do it; and that you may be vigorous in doing it, as I shall take a little of the wine for my stomach's sake, take you a good deal of the wine of the kingdom for your soul's sake. Every promise of the gospel is a bott'e, a cask that has a spring within, and can never be drawn out. But draw the cork of unbelief, and drink abundantly O beloved, nor be afraid of intoxication; and if an inflammation follows, it will be only that of divine love. I beg you will be more free with the heavenly wine than I have been with that of the earthly one you sent me, I have not tasted it yet, but whose fault is it? Not yours certainly, but mine. If you do not drink daily spiritual health and vigour out of the cup of salvation, whose fault is it? Not Jesus's but yours; as he gives you his righteousness to cover your nakedness, and the consolations of his Spirit to cheer and invigorate your soul. Accept and use. Wear, drink and live to God! That you may heartily and constantly do this, is my sincere prayer for you and yours: especially your poor daughter, whom I trust you have resigned into the hands of him, to whom she is nearer than to you. The wise Disposer of all things knows what is best for her. The hairs of her head, much more the days of her life are all numbered. The Lord often
destroys

destroys the body, that the soul may be saved. And if this is the case here, as one may reasonably hope, you will not say unto the Lord what doest thou? But say with the father who lost two sons in one day, "*It is the Lord*, let him do whatsoever he pleaseth;"—or with him that lost ten children at one stroke, "The Lord gave, and the Lord taketh away, blessed be the Name of the Lord."

Adieu,

JOHN FLETCHER.



L E T T E R V I I I .

To Miss IRELAND, while at Montpelier for her Health.

My very dear Friend,

THE poor account your father hath brought us of your health, and his apprehensions of not seeing you any more, before that solemn day when all people, nations and tongues shall stand together at the bar of God, make me venture (together with my love to you) to send you a few lines; and my earnest prayer to God is, that they may be blessed to your soul.—First, then my dear friend, let me beseech you not to flatter yourself with the hopes of living long here on earth. These hopes fill us with worldly thoughts, and make us backward to prepare for our change. I would not for the world entertain such thoughts about myself. I have now

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in my parish, a young man who has been these two years under the surgeon's hands. Since they have given him up, which is about two months ago, he hath fled to the Lord, and found in him, that saving health which surpasseth a thousand times what the surgeons flattered him with, and he longs to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. To see the bridge of life cut off behind us, and to have done with all thoughts of repairing it, to go back into the world, hath a natural tendency to make us venture forward to the foot of the cross.

2dly. Consider my dear how good the Lord is to call you to be transplanted into a better world, before you have taken deeper root in this sinful world; and if it is hard to nature to die now, how much harder do you think it would be, if you lived to be the mother of a family, and to cleave to earth by the ties of many new relations, schemes of gain, or prospects of happiness.

3dly. Reflect by your illness, the Lord who forecasts for us, intimates long life would not have been for his glory, nor your happiness. From my soul I believe he takes many young people from the evil to come, and out of the way of those temptations or misfortunes which would have made them miserable in time and in eternity.

4thly.

4thly. Your earthly father loves you much ; witness the hundred miles he has gone for the bare prospect of your health. But my dear, your heavenly Father loves you a thousand times better ; and he is all wisdom as well as all goodness. Allow then, such a gracious loving Father to chuse for you ; and if he chuses death, acquiesce, and say, as you can, *good is the will of the Lord*, his choice must be best.

5thly. Weigh the sinfulness of sin, both original and actual, and firmly believe the wages of sin is death ; this will make you patiently accept the punishment, especially if you consider, that Jesus Christ by dying for us, hath taken away the sting of death and turned the grave into a passage to a blessed eternity.

6thly. O my dear, try to get nearer to the dear Redeemer, he hath de'ivered us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us, *Gal. iii. 9.* He hath quenched the wrath of God in his atoning blood. By his atoning blood, by his harmless life and painful death, he hath satisfied all the demands of the law and justice of God ; by his resurrection he asserted the full discharge of all our spiritual debts ; by his ascension into heaven, where he is gone to prepare us a place, he hath opened a way to endless glory. By his powerful intercession and the merits of his blood, which pleads continually for us, he keeps that way open, and to encourage us, he assures us, *He is the way, the*

truth, and the life, and that he who comes to him, he will in no wise cast out. He mildly offers rest to the heavy laden, pardon to the guilty, strength to the feeble, and life to the dead; you know his words—"I am the resurrection and the life, he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and he that liveth and believeth in me, shall never die."

7thly. When you have considered your lost state as a sinner by nature, together with the greatness, the fulness, the freeness and suitability of Christ's salvation, and when you have diligently viewed the glories and charms of his person, believe in Him; without any ceremony chuse him for your physician, your husband and your king. Be not afraid to venture upon and trust in him, cast yourself on him in frequent acts of reliance, and stay your soul on him by means of his promises. Pray much for faith, and be not afraid of accepting, using and thanking God for a little. The smoking flax will he not quench, only pray hard, that he would blow it up into a blaze of light and love.

8thly. Beware of impatience, repining and peevishness, the sins of sick people. Be gentle, easy to be pleased, and resigned as the bleeding Lamb of God; wrong tempers indulged, grieve if they do not quench the Spirit.

9thly.

gthly. Do not repine at your being in a strange country, far from your friends; and if your going to France does not answer the end proposed as to your body, it will answer a spiritual end as to your soul. God suffers the broken reeds of your acquaintance, to be out of your reach, that you may not catch at them, and that you may at once cast your lonesome soul on the bosom of him, who fills heaven and earth.

10thly. In praying, reading, hearing any person read, and meditating, do not consult feeble, fainting, weary flesh and blood; for at this rate death may find you idle and supine, instead of striving to enter in at the straight gate: and when your spirits and vigour fail, remember that the Lord is the strength of your life, and your portion for ever. O death, where is thy sting? thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Many pray hard for you, that you may quit yourself living or dying, in ease or in pain, as a wise virgin, and as a good soldier of Jesus Christ; but above all, Jesus the Captain of your salvation, and the High Priest of your profession, intercedes mightily for you. Look to him and be saved, even from the ends of France.—To his pity, love, and power, I recommend you. May he bless you, my dear friend, lift up the light of his countenance upon you, and give you peace and courage, repentance,

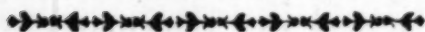
ance, faith, hope, and patient love, both now
and evermore.

I am

Your affectionate sincere Friend,

And servant in Jesus,

JOHN FLETCHER.



L E T T E R VIII.

To the same.

Dec. 5, 1768.

My dear afflicted Friend,

I Hear you are returned home from the last journey you took in quest of bodily health. Your heavenly Father sees fit to deny you, not because he hateth you, for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, but because health and life might be fatal snares to your soul, out of which you could not escape but by tedious illness, and an early death. Who knows also, whether by all that you have suffered and still do suffer, our gracious Lord does not intend to kill you to the flesh and the world, and both to you. Besides our hearts are so stupid, and our insensibility so great, that the Father of our Spirits sees it necessary to put some of his sharpest, longest thorns into our flesh, to make us go to our dear Jesus for the balmy graces of his Spirit. I believe some are drove out of all refuges of crafty and indolent nature; only by the near-
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est and last approaches of that faithful minister and servant of Christ, death. Of this I had a remarkable instance no later than last Monday, when God took to himself one of my poor afflicted parishioners, a boy of fifteen years of age, who was turned out of the infirmary two years ago as incurable. From that time he grew weaker every day by the running of a wound, but his poor soul did not gather strength; in many respects one would have thought his afflictions were lost upon him. He seemed to rest in his sufferings, and his patience under them, more than in the Saviour's blood and righteousness. Being wore to a skeleton, he took to his death bed; there I found him the week before last, with his candle burning in the socket, and no oil seemingly in the vessel. I spent an hour in setting before him the greatness of his guilt in this respect, that he had been so long under the rod of God, and had not been whipt out of his careless unbelief, to the bosom of Jesus Christ. He fell under the conviction, confessed that particular guilt, and began to call on the Lord with all the earnestness his dying frame did allow. This was on the Wednesday. The next Wednesday, the God who delivers those that are appointed to die, set one of his feet upon the rock, and the next Sunday, (the day before he died) the other. He had chiefly plyed that short petition of the Lord's prayer, "Thy kingdom come;" and he spent his last hours in testifying as his strength

and the love of his mission. I would

would allow, that the kingdom was come, and he was going to the King; to whom he invited his joyful mournful mother to make the best of her way after him. Five or six days before his death, my wicked unbelieving heart might have said, to what purpose hath God afflicted so long and so heavily this poor worm? But the Lord shewed that he had all that while drove the spear of consideration and of conviction, till at last it touched him in the sensible part, and made him cry to the Saviour in earnest. And who ever called upon him in vain? No one! Not even that poor indolent collier boy, who for two years would not so much as cross the way to hear me preach. Yet how good was the Lord: because his body was too weak to bear any terrors in his mind, he shewed him mercy without. The moment I heard him pray, and saw him feel after a Saviour, my fears on his account vanished; and though he would not have been suffered to testify so clearly the coming of God's kingdom, yet I would have had a joyful hope that God had taken him up to it.

Like the poor youth and myself, you have but one enemy, my dear friend, an indolent, unbelieving heart; but the Lord hath drove it to a corner, to make you cry to him who hath been waiting at the door all these years of trouble, to bring you pardon, peace, and eternal life, in the midst of the pangs of bodily death. Jesus is his name. Salvation and love are his nature.

nature. He is the Father of eternity; your Father of course.—All the love that is in Mr. Ireland's breast, is nothing to the abyss of love which is in your Creator's heart. A mother may forget her suckling child, but I will not forget thee, says He to every poor distressed soul that claims his help.

O fear not, my friend, to say, I will arise and go to this Father, though I have sinned greatly against heaven and in his sight. Lo he rises, and runs to meet, to embrace you. He hath already met you in the virgin's womb: then he did so cleave to your flesh and spirit, that he assumed both, and wears them as a pledge of love to you. Claim in return, claim as you can his blood and spirit. Both are now the property of every dying sinner that is not above receiving, by faith, the unspeakable gift.

Your father hath crossed the sea for you—Jesus hath done more.—He hath crossed the abyss that lies between heaven and earth, between the Creator and the creature. He hath waded through the sea of his tears, blood and agonies, not to take you to the Physician at Montpelier, but to become your own Physician and Saviour himself—to support you under all your bodily tortures—sanctify all your extremities—and to heal your soul by his multiplied stripes. Your father hath spared no expence to restore you to your health, but Jesus who
wants

wants you in your prime, hath spared no blood in his veins to wash you from your sins, write your pardon, and seal your title to glory.

O my friend, delay not to surrender yourself chearfully to this good shepherd. He will lay you gladly on the arm of his power—torn as you are with the bruises of sin and diseases, and will carry you triumphantly to his heavenly sheepfold.—Look not at your sins without beholding his blood and righteousness.—Eye not death, but to behold through that black door, your gracious Saviour saying, Fear not! O thou of little faith, wherefore dost thou doubt? I am the resurrection and the life. Consider not eternity, but as the palace where you are going to enter with the Bridegroom of souls, and rest from all your sins and miseries. View not the condemning law of God, but as made honourable by him, who was a curse for you, and bore the the malediction of the law by hanging, bleeding, and dying on the cursed tree in your place. If you think of hell, let it be to put you in mind to believe that the blood of God incarnate hath quenched its devouring flames. If you have no comfort, mistrust not Jesus on that account; on the contrary, take advantage from it to give greater glory to God, by believing as Abraham in hope against hope.—And let this be your greatest comfort, that Jesus who had all faith and patience, cried out for you in his dying moments—My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken

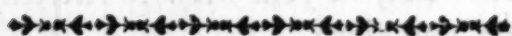
faken me ! Only as your strength exerted, and his grace apprehended will allow—Surrender yourself constantly to him, as the purchase of his blood, and invite him earnestly to you as a poor worm perishing without him. In this simple gospel way, wait the Lord's leisure, and he will comfort your heart.

He will make all his goodness to pass before you here, or take you hence to shew you what possibly you could not bear in flesh and blood, the direct beams of the uncreated beauty of your heavenly Spouse.

I hope you take care to have little or nothing else mentioned to and about you, but his praises and promises. Your tongue and ears are going to be silent in the grave, now or never use them to hear and speak good of his Name.—Comfort your weeping friends. Exhort those that are careless.—Reprove the backsliders.—Encourage seekers.—Water, and you shall be watered again. Death upon you, makes you through Christ, a mother in Israel.—Arise, as Deborah.—Remember the praying,—believing,—preaching,—though dying thief!—and be not afraid to drop a word for him who openeth a fountain of blood for you in his dying tortured body.—Suffer, live, die at his feet,—and you will soon revive, sing, and reign in his bosom for evermore.

Farewel in the Conqueror of death, and
Prince of Life.

JOHN FLETCHER.
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L E T T E R IX.

To the Society at Dublin.

Madeley, March, 1772.

My dear Brethren,

MERCY and love be multiplied unto you, from Him who was and is to come, the Almighty! I should have acknowledged before the favour of two letters you honoured me with, if I had not conveyed my thanks to you immediately by means of brother Morgan. But thanks at second-hand, donot satisfy my gratitude; permit me therefore to present them, if not in person, at least by some grateful lines personally written.

I am much obliged to those of you, who approve of my little attempt to vindicate practical religion, and the character of an eminent servant of Christ, who ministered unto you in holy things, which some of our mistaken friends in England exposed as the author of dreadful heresy. The thanks which some of you unexpectedly bestowed upon me on that occasion, I have laid at the feet of Jesus, to whom all praise belongs, who is the author of every good gift, and from whom comes all the help done upon the earth.

When I took up my pen, I aimed at discharging my duty towards God, and his misapprehended

prehended truth; towards my honoured father in Christ, Mr. Wesley, and his misunderstood minutes; and though all the world should have blamed me, they would never have robbed me of the satisfaction of having at least attempted to clear my conscience.

The manner in which part of you have refused me their thanks, is too civil and brotherly, not to deserve mine. I wish many of our English brethren had been so moderate as you, in their disapprobation of my letters to the Rev. Mr. Shirley. You will see in a second check to Antinomianism, some things that may reconcile you to the first, and I have just sent to the press, a third check, to what appears to me the favourite delusion of the church; which will I trust cast more light on the delicate subject about which we divide.

If we cannot see things in the same light, I hope we never shall, I beg we never may, disagree in love.—

I am glad you agreed to disagree about the giving or refusing me your undeserved thanks. Let every little rub of opposition, heighten our love; every little clashing of sentiment make the heavenly spark shew itself, kindle our souls into that charity, which hopeth all things, endureth all things, thinketh no evil, and is not provoked.

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If I have been obliged to bear a little hard upon my dear honoured brother Mr. Shirley, I beg that nothing I have written to him, on account of his precipitancy, rashness, or hurry, may prevent you from looking upon him with the love and respect due to a minister of Christ. Recommending him and myself to your prayers, and taking the liberty to recommend to you, mutual forbearance, a daily increase of brotherly love, and a continual growth in the genuine liberty of the gospel.

I remain, my dear Brethren,
Your obliged, affectionate, and obedient brother
and Servant,

JOHN FLETCHER.



L E T T E R X.

To Mr. HENRY BROOKE.

Dear Sir, Madeley, 6th Sept. 1772.

IF to do, was as present with me as to wish, you would have been half ruined in postages. I cannot tell you how often I have thought of thanking you for your kind letter. My controversy made me put it off for some time, and when I was going one day to answer you, a clergyman called upon me, read your letter, said you was a sensible author, and if I would let him have it, he would let me have your *Fool of Quality*, of whom I had never heard. I forget
to

to take your direction, and my backwardness to writing, had a very good excuse to indulge itself. However it ceases now : after some months my friend has sent me back your unexpected, but welcome favour. I know in what street you live, a thousand thanks for it, and a thousand more for the amiable character of your Harry, my kind, my new correspondent. May this sheet convey them warm from my heart to yours, and from thence may they return like a thousand drops into that immense ocean of goodness, truth, love and delight, whence come all the streams which gladden the universe, and ravish the city of God.

I thankfully accept the pleasure, profit, and honour of your correspondence. But I must not deceive you ; I have not yet learned the blessed precept of our Lord, in part of writing and receiving letters. I still find it more blessed to *receive* than to *give* ; and till I have got out of that selfishness, never depend upon a letter from me till you see it, and be persuaded nevertheless that one from you will be always welcome.

I see by your works that you love truth, and that you will force me through all the barriers of prejudice, to embrace it in its meanest dress. That makes me love you. I hope to improve by your example and lessons. One thing I want truly to learn, that is, that creatures and visible things are but shadows, and

that God is God, Jehovah, the true eternal substance. To live practically in this truth, is to live in the suburbs of heaven. Really to believe that in God we live, move, and have our being, is to find and enjoy the root of our existence ; it is to slide from self into our original principle, from the carnal into the spiritual, from the visible into the invisible, from time into eternity. Give me at your leisure, some directions how to cease from busying myself about the husk of things ; and how I shall break through the shell till I come to the kernel of resurrection, life, and power that lies hid from the unbelievers sight. You mention " a short sketch of your path already passed, and of your present feelings : " I believe it will be profitable to me for instruction and reproof, therefore I shall thankfully accept it.— Pray, my dear Sir, about *feelings*, are you possessed of all the feelings of your Clinton, Clement, and Harry ? Are they natural to you, I mean previous to what we generally call conversion ? I have often thought that some of the feelings you describe, depend a great deal upon the fineness of the nerves, and bodily organs : and as I am rather of a Stoic turn, I have sometimes comforted myself in thinking, that my want of feelings might in a degree proceed from the dulness of Swiss nerves. If I am mistaken, Providence directs me to you to have that important question solved. May not some persons have as much true faith, love, humanity, and pity, as others who are ten times more affected, for a time

it since my arrival, if I knew where a letter could overtake you. I heartily thank you about the directions you give me to hinder my bow, so far split, from breaking quite. Now I must imitate your prudence, or the opportunity of doing it will soon be lost for good.

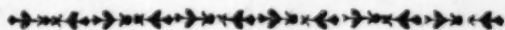
I would do something in the Lord's vineyard, but I have not strength. I can hardly, without over-doing myself, visit the sick of my Parish. I was better when I left Switzerland, than I am now; I had a great pull back in venturing to preach in the fields, in the Cevennes, to about two thousand French Protestants. I rode thirty miles to that place from Montpelier, on horseback, but was obliged to be brought back in a carriage. And now that I am here I can neither serve my Church, nor get it properly served. Mr. G—s owns, the place is not fit for him, nor he for it. He will go when I can get some body to help me. Could you spare me brother B——? It would be a charity. Unless I can get a curate zealous enough to stir among the people, I will give up the place: it would be little comfort to me stay here to see the dead bury the dead. I thank God however, for resignation to his will. As soon as I shall discern it clearly, I shall follow it; for I trust I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. What a blessing is Christ to the soul, and health to the body! When you go to, or come from the conference, be so good as to remember that you have now a pilgrim's

grim's house in the way from Shrewsbury to Broseley; and do not go and climb our hills without baiting. At our first interview, I shall ask your thoughts about a French Work or two I have upon the anvil; but which I fear I shall not have time to finish. Be that as it will, God needs not the hand of Uzzah, nor my finger, to keep up his ark. I read with pleasure and edification, your Arminian Magazine. Your storehouse is inexhaustible. The Lord strengthen you to *Nestor's* years, or rather, to the useful length of *St. John's* life. It is worth living to serve the Church, and to teach Christians to love one another.

I am, Rev. and dear Sir,

Your affectionate, though unprofitable Servant,

JOHN FLETCHER.



L E T T E R XIII.

To the same.

Madeley, June 24, 1781.

Rev. and dear Sir,

AS to Miss L——, I believe her to be a simple, holy follower of the Lord. Nothing throws *unscriptural* Mysticism down like holding out the promise of the Father, and the fullness of the Spirit, to be received *now*, *by faith* in the two Promisers, the *Father* and the *Son*. Ah! what is the *penal fire* of the Mystics, to
the

the *burning love* of the *Spirit*, revealing the glorious power of the *Father* and the *Son*, according to John xiv. 26, and filling us with all the fulness of God? Plain Scripture is better than all Mystic refinements.

When I was at N——, near Geneva, three Ministers received the Word, and preached the Truth. When persecution arose because of the Word, the two Pastors were afraid; but the Curate of the first Pastor, a Burgess of the town, stood by me. This Timothy opened his house, when the Pastors shut both their pulpits and houses; and I heard him preach a Discourse before I came away, worthy of *you*, Sir, upon the heights and depths of holiness. He wrote an apology for me, which he sent to the head of the persecuting Clergy, and so stopped the torrent of wrath. He made observations upon the mischief done Christianity by a bad Clergy, such as George Fox, and you, Sir, would not disown. When I told him of you and the Methodists, he expressed a great desire to come to England, to hear you, to see the English brethren, and to learn English, that he might read your Works, and perhaps translate some of them. He can have no Living in his own country, because he will not *swear to persecute all who propagate Arminian Tenets*: which is more honest than the Clergy, many of whom are Arians, Socinians or Deists, and do not scruple to take the Calvinian Oaths! I shall endeavour to wait upon
you

you at Leeds at the time of the Conference : in the mean time,

I am, Rev. and dear Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

And affectionate Son in the Gospel.

JOHN FLETCHER.



L E T T E R XII.

Dear Sir,

Madeley, 20th April, 1782.

LAST Saturday I received your kind invitation to take a journey to Dublin, with my wife ; and we join in sincere thanks for the kind and generous offers, which accompany that invitation. Two reasons, at this time, concur to make me postpone the accepting of it : for, not to mention my weak state of health, I have been so long absent from my parish, that my parishioners have a just claim to my stated labours *for some time* ; and Mr. B—, my curate, being wanted at Kingswood School, I must serve my own church myself ; and the duty is so continual, that I dare not go twenty miles from home, much less to a neighbouring kingdom. Providence may, if it be for the glory of God, make a way for me to go, and return my thanks in person. In the mean time, I beg you, Sir, to present them to all our brethren who set their
hands

hands to your kind letter. If I took you, Sir, for the author of the Fool of Quality, I thought I saw his style in the style of your letter; however, I was not much mistaken, your pen is as nearly allied to his, as your blood to his. May one Spirit, the humble, loving spirit of Jesus, make us all of one heart and soul! May we, notwithstanding the channel that separates our bodies, rejoice that one truth unites our souls; and that the common faith and love, make us join daily in Christ our common Head! so prays,

Dear Sir,

Your affectionate, obliged brother,
and Servant,

JOHN FLETCHER.



L E T T E R XIV.

Nov. 13, 1783.

DEAR Mrs. B — has within these few days much lain on my mind; in particular yesterday at ten o'clock, as I was at prayer, I remembered your sore trial; the blessing you got at the Gravel Walk, and an expression you once used to me in your garden,—which was,

“ O I love

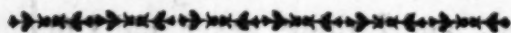
"*O I love the cross.*" As these thoughts passed through my mind, I lifted up my heart with desire in your behalf, and felt a union very close and particular with your spirit; and if much land and the great water were not between us, it would rejoice me now and then to take sweet counsel with you and dear brother B——. Indeed both my dear and me were peculiarly united in spirit with you both, and we truly sympathize with you in your present affliction, from the hurt Mrs. S—— informs us Mr. B—— has got on his leg. O may every trial unite you more closely to your divine, glorified, but once crucified Head. To me you appear one whom the Lord hath chosen in the furnace; one of his favoured ones, who hath the honour to bear that mark of his sheep. O may all his will be accomplished in us both, and all the work of faith with power. I am bound to thank you my dear, for the present you made me of Lady Guion's Life. I am reading it through to my husband, and I think never did I find greater unction in it. O may her sweet spirit of humble love be ours! It is a book I dearly love, and the better because the gift of my dear Sister to her unworthy friend,

MARY FLETCHER.

John Fletcher sends kindest thanks and most cordial love to dear brother B——, for all the love he has shewed him and his partner. We have sorrowed together: O let us hope, yea rejoice
in

in hope together—in hope of the glory of God, reserved both for our souls and bodies, for ourselves and the church. The salvation by faith in what Christ has done, and by hope in what he has promised to do, certainly belongs to us, till we are saved by the love of God shed abroad by the Holy Ghost into all the life of God. Help me, dear Brother, to look up with a steadfast eye to the centre of our life, to the fountain of our power. As my wife was reading to me the account Madam Guion gives of her communion with absent friends, I experienced it for and with you. Let us be more united with the Head, and we shall be so with the members. The Lord repay your patient love towards us, repay your gifts to us, and give you a double portion in the truth and love which breathe in St. Paul's Epistles. My love to your other self.

JOHN FLETCHER.



L E T T E R XV.

To W—S—, Esq;

Madeley, Nov. 24, 1783.

Dear Sir,

THE many and great favours you have loaded us with, during our long stay under your hospitable roof, prompted us to make you the earliest acknowledgments of our obligations; and to beg
you

you would receive our warmest thanks for such unexpected, undeserved tokens of your brotherly love; but the wanting to load our *only* frank has hindered there being more early traced upon paper, though they have been, are now, and (we trust) shall ever be deeply engraven on our hearts. You have united for us the Irish hospitality, the English cordiality, and the French politeness. And now, Sir, what shall we say? You are our generous benefactor, and we your affectionate, though unprofitable servants. In one sense, we are on a level with those, to whom you shew your charity in the streets; we can do nothing but *pray for you, your dear partner, and yours*. You have kindly received us for Christ's sake: May God receive you freely for his sake also! You have borne with our infirmities: the Lord bear with yours also! You have let your servants serve us: the Lord give also his servants and his angels charge concerning you, that you hurt not your foot against a stone; and be helped out of every difficulty! You have given us a most comfortable resting place, and pleasing apartment under your own roof, next to your own chamber: The Lord grant you eternal rest with him in his heavenly mansions! Nay, may he himself be your habitation and resting for ever, and place you and yours with his own jewels, in his choicest repository of precious things! You have fed us with the richest food: May the Giver of every perfect gift, fit you for a place at his heavenly

table ; and may you rank there with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob ! You have given us most generous wines ; May you drink, with Christ himself, the fruit of the vine new in our Father's kingdom ! You gave us rich provisions for the way : When you cross the flood, the deep flood of death, may you find your heavenly Lord has made such a rich provision of faith, righteousness, hope, and joy for you, that you may rejoice, triumph and sing, while you leave your earthly friends to go home ; which (by the bye) is more than we were enabled to do : for, instead of *singing* in our cabins, there was a very different melody. However, we could soon, with joyful, thankful hearts, look back from the British, to the Irish shore, and greet (in spirit) the dear friends we had left there. The Lord bless and increase them in spirituals, and (if best for them) in temporal goods also ! The Lord crown them and theirs with loving-kindness and mercies, equal to the love of our God, and the merits of our Saviour. And now, dear Sir, what shall I add ? I cannot now see even my Bible without the medium of your love, and the token with which it alternately loads my pocket and my hand. I cannot even seal a letter of thanks with a *good wafer*, but I find a new call to repeat my thanks to you. I would begin again—but my scrap of paper is full, as well as my heart ; and I must spare a line to tell you, I had the pleasure of seeing our dear benefactress Mrs. S—, safe at Bristol, with her little charge, and

and Lady Mary. And we must beg our thanks to John, Mr. and Mrs. J—, and all who were kind to us for Christ's sake, and yours.

We remain, dear Sir,

Your most affectionate, and most
obliged pensioners and servants,

JOHN and MARY FLETCHER.

We desire to be affectionately and gratefully remembered to Mr. and Mrs. M—, Mr. and Mrs. E—, and particularly to your polite and friendly uncle.



L E T T E R XVI.

TO THE DUBLIN SOCIETY.

TO all the dear brethren, who, after kindly inviting John and Mary Fletcher, patiently bearing with them, and their infirmities; and entertaining them in the most hospitable, christian manner; have (to all these favours) added that of thanking them for their most pleasant, and profitable journey to Dublin.

Brethren, and dearly beloved in the Lord, we had felt shame enough under the sense of your kindness and patience towards *us*, and of *our* unprofitableness towards *you*, when at Dublin. You needed not to have added to our shame, by the new token of your love, the

friendly letter we have received from you. *We*,
 WE are indebted to *you*, dear brethren; WE
 owed you the letter of thanks you have gratuit-
 ously sent. But in all things you will have
 the pre-eminence; and we are glad to drink
 the cup of humility at your feet. May the
 Lord (who can part a sea by the touch of a
 rod, and could at first, cause the earth to bring
 forth abundantly all manner of plants and trees
 without seed,) so bless the seed of his word,
 which we sowed in great weakness among you,
 as to make it produce a full crop of humble re-
 pentance, chearful faith, triumphant hope, and
 sanctifying influences of God's spirit in your
 hearts, in all your families, in all your assem-
 blies, and in your whole society! If your pro-
 fuse liberality towards us, abounded to the
 comfort of our poor brethren, we doubly re-
 joice on *your* account, and on *theirs*. When
 we see so many of your dear names, we rejoice
 in hope, that, as they fill and confirm an epis-
 tle dictated by overflowing love; so they fill the
 list of the dear people, whom our great High
 Priest bears not only on his breast-plate as
 Aaron did, but on his bleeding hands, and on
 his very heart, which is the everflowing and
 overflowing fountain of divine and brotherly
 love. We cannot express to you how dear all
 your names are to us. Though we cannot re-
 member all your faces, we remember what will
 last longer than your features, your work and
 labours, and repasts of love; together with your
 prayers

prayers, sighs and groans. May that seed sown be watered by the Redeemer's blood! and may the blessing of the Father of mercies, be upon it abundantly! We ask it with tears of gratitude and joy, while we (on our bended knees) spread your names as you have kindly sent them, and your wants (so far as we remember them) before the Father of mercies, and the Author of every perfect gift. Let our worthless names still find a place in your memory, when you remember your brethren distant in the flesh, but near in the Spirit: and among such still vouchsafe to reckon,

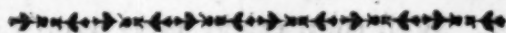
Dear Brethren,

Your very affectionate;

and truly obliged servants in Christ;

JOHN FLETCHER,

MARY FLETCHER.



L E T T E R XVII.

To MRS. D——.

AND was my dear brother and sister D—, pleased by the receipt of a letter from such an unworthy worm? Oh that I could convey some word from the mouth of my adorable Lord to your hearts. Oh that he would permit me, his poor creature, to drop a sentence that might prove some encouragement to my dear friends in their way. You ask shall I hope ever to attain the clean heart, and walk

in purity while here below? Why not.—Abraham hoped against hope, and there sprang from him as good as dead, a posterity as the stars of heaven for multitude. Does unbelief say thou art dead; thou hast outstayed the day: it is all over? Then arise out of the dust, rouse up all your powers, *against hope believe in hope*, and by faith receive strength to apprehend all the fulness of God. Remember Christ is in your faith,—hold *faith* and you hold *Christ*. If you know not how to get hold on faith, remember faith is in the promise, seek out for a promise, and get *hold there*. But if you cry out, I see the links of the chain so far, but alas I cannot get hold of the promise: I don't know which is for me: I cannot reach so far?—Well don't faint yet, here is another link lower still, that is to say, *thy wants*. Can you be sure there is any wound within, are you certain you are a sinner? Well then reach your hand hither.—I came not to call the righteous, but sinners!—Are you a helpless sinner?—To them who have no might he increaseth strength—Are you an ungrateful, backsliding, adulterous sinner? Hear him saying, “Thou hast played the harlot with many lovers, but return unto me, saith the Lord.”—And if you doubt whether you may believe for a *great measure of holiness*; whether your soul (already in old age and barren) shall believe for abundant fruitfulness? Answer yourself, my dear friend, from that word, “Who so *will* let him take of the water of life freely,”

freely," and he that believeth on me, out of his soul (which hath digested the word of God) shall flow rivers of living water. I have just told Mrs. S— thus, of one of our sisters here a deeper unbeliever than you but now quite full of God; I refer you to her letter, Much haste made me short and rambling. O my God, in mercy let thy power rest on thy dear servant! Convey even by this poor scrawl some power to their hearts, some fresh light into the mighty chain which begins with *man's wickedness*, hangs on God's mercy in the promise; *faith's victory* springing therefrom, and Christ's fullness becoming all in all. We pray the God of love to be with *your* children, and all who meet with them. Tell sister H— to keep hold of the chain, it shall draw her into the holy of holies. And with our kindest and most grateful remembrance of you both, we remain,

Your sincere,

but unworthy friends,

JOHN and MARY FLETCHER.

My dear's face has been quite well a good while, and myself better than when in Dublin. But we are oft put in mind of our endless home, and he each night sleeps as if we were to wake no more. I think he scarce ever omits *that observation*.

L E T T E R XVIII.

To Mr. H— B—

Madeley, April 27, 1784.

My dear Brother,

MERCY, peace, and perfect love attend you, your dear partner, and the dear friends who live under your roof, and with whom I beg you may abide under the cross, till with John, Mary, and Salomé, &c. you *all* can say, We are crucified with Him, and the life we now live, we live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved us, and gave himself for us. You are certainly in the right, when you prefer the *inward* to the *outward*. The former is the *safer*, but *both together* make up the beauty of holiness. The inward may be compared to the husband, the outward to the fruitful wife: What God hath joined together, let no man, no angel transformed into light, put asunder.

With respect to the glory of the Lord, *it is at hand*; whatever false wisdom and unbelief may whisper to our hearts. It can be no farther off than the presence of Him, who *fills all in all*. Our wrong notions of things are a main hinderance to our *slipping* into it. Perhaps also our minding more the cherubim of glory, than the plain tables, and the manna hid in the ark. There is a passing (as Bromley said) from the *outward* to the *inward*, and from the

INWARD

INWARD to the INMOST; and it is only from the inmost that we can see the Lord's *spiritual* glory.

Pray, my dear Brother, when you are so fixed in the *inmost*, as not to lose sight of Him who dwells both in *light* and in the *thick darkness*, let me share in your joy. Love will make me partake of your happiness. With respect to what you say of the kingdom, not coming with the outward pomp, which is observable by the men of the world, it is strictly true. But that there is an *inward* display of *power* and *glory* under pentecostal christianity, is undeniable, both from our Lord's *promises* to his imperfect disciples, and from their *experiences* after the kingdom was come to them with power.

It is sometimes suggested to me, that as the apostacy hath chiefly consisted in the going after the *pomp* of the whore of Babylon, so while the woman, who fled into the wilderness, remains there as a widow, she *must* be deprived even of those *true* ornaments, and of that *spiritual* glory, which was bestowed upon her on the day of Pentecost, the day of her espousals. But I do not close in with the suggestion, as I am not *sure* that it cannot come from Satan transformed into an angel of light, to rob me of a bright jewel of my christian hope. To wait in deep resignation, and with a constant attention to what the Lord will please to do or say concerning

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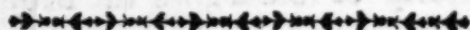
ing us, and his church; and to leave to him *the times and seasons*, is what I am chiefly called to do; taking care to avoid falling into either ditch, I mean into the *speculation* careless of *action*, or into the *activity* which is devoid of spirituality. I *would* not have a lamp without oil; and I *could* not have oil without a lamp, and a vessel to hold it in for myself, and to communicate it to others.

I thank you, my dear friend, for the parcel of books you have sent me. I read with pleasure Ramsay's Theological Works, which were quite unknown to me. My good wishes attend both your brothers. Fare you all well in Christ.

So prays

JOHN FLETCHER.

P. S. Pray remember me to brother P—— and D——.



L E T T E R XIX.

To the same.

Madeley, 28th Feb. 1785.

My dear Brother,

WE are all shadows. Your mortal parent hath passed away, and we do pass away after him. Blessed be the Author of every good gift for the shadow of his eternal paternity displayed in our deceased parents. What was good, loving,

loving, and lovely in them, is hid with Christ in God; where we may still enjoy it implicitly, and where we shall explicitly enjoy it, when he shall appear. A lesson I learn daily is to see and enjoy things and persons, in *their invisible root*, and in their *eternal principle*, where they are not subject to change, decay, and death; but where they blossom and shine in the primæval excellence allotted them by their gracious Creator. By this means I learn to walk by faith, and not by sight. But, like a child, instead of walking strait and firmly in this good spiritual way, I am still apt to cling here or there, which makes me cry, Lord, let me see all things clearly; that I may never mistake a shadow for the substance, nor put any creature (no not for a moment) in the place of the Creator: who deserves to be loved and admired, and sought after with *all* the powers of our soul. Tracing his image in all the footsteps of nature, or looking for the divine signature in every creature, as we would look for a king's image on an old, rusty medal, is true *philosophy*; and to find out that which is of God in ourselves, is true *theosophy*: genuine *godliness*; I hope you will never be afraid or ashamed of it. I see no danger in these studies and meditations, provided we still keep the end in view: The *all of God*, and the *shadowy nothing* of all that is visible.

With respect to the great Pentecostal display of the Spirit's glory, I still look for it within
and

and without; and to look for it aright, is the lesson I learn. I am now led to be afraid of that in my nature, which would be for pomp, show, and visible glory. I am afraid of falling by such an expectation into what I call a *spiritual judaizing*; into a looking for Christ's coming in my own pompous conceit, which might make me reject him. If his wisdom, to crucify mine, chose to come in a meaner way; and if instead of coming in his Father's glory, he chose to come meek, riding, not on the cherubim, but as it were on the foal of an ass. Our Saviour said with respect to his going to the feast, *my time is not yet come*; whether his time to come and turn the thieves and buyers out of the outward church is yet come, I know not. I doubt Jerusalem and the holy place is yet given to be trodden under foot by the Gentiles. But my Jerusalem! why is it not swallowed up of the glory of that which comes down from heaven, is a question which I wait to solve by the teaching of the great Prophet, who is alone possessed of Urim and Thummim. The mighty power to wrestle with him is all divine: and I often pray,

“ That mighty faith on me bestow,
Which cannot ask in vain,
Which holds, and will not let thee go,
'Till I my suit obtain.
'Till thou into my soul inspire,
That perfect love unknown,
And tell my infinite desire,
Whate'er thou wilt be done.”

In short, the Lord crucifies my *wisdom* and my *will* every way; but I must be crucified as the *thieves*. *All my bones must be broken*, for there is still in me that impatience of wisdom, which would stir, when the tempter says, *Come down from the cross*. It is not for us to know the times and the seasons, the manner and mystical means of God's working; but only to hunger and thirst, and lie passive before the great Potter. In short, I begin to be content to be a vessel of *clay*, or of *wood*, so I be emptied of self, and filled with my God, my all. Don't give up your confident hope: it saves still secretly; and it hath a *present*, and by and by it will have a *great* recompense of reward. I am glad, exceeding glad that your dear partner goes on simply and believingly. Such a companion is a great blessing, if you know how to make use of it. For when two of you shall agree touching one thing in prayer, it shall be done. My wife and I endeavour to fathom the meaning of that deep promise; join your line to ours, and let us search; what, after all exceeds knowledge, viz. the wisdom and the power, the love and faithfulness of God. My wife and I, we embrace you both; and pray you would help one another and us by your prayers. *Adieu. Be God's*, as the French say, and see *God yours* in Christ, for you, for Brother D—, S—, P—, Mrs. B—, &c. Your obliged friends,

JOHN and MARY FLETCHER.

Our love to all friends, especially your brother, &c.

F

HEADS

HEADS OF SELF-EXAMINATION,

BY THE

REV. MR. FLETCHER.

1st. **D**ID I awake spiritual, and was I watchful in keeping my mind from wandering this morning when I was rising?

2d. Have I this day got nearer to God in times of prayer, or have I given way to a lazy, idle spirit?

3d. Has my faith been weakened by unwatchfulness, or quickened by diligence this day?

4th. Have I this day walked by faith, and eyed God in all things?

5th. Have I denied myself in all unkind words and thoughts; have I delighted in seeing others preferred before me, and can I lay my hand upon my heart, and say,

“That mercy I to others shew,

“That mercy shew to me?”

6th. Have I made the most of my precious time, as far as I had light, strength, and opportunity?

7th. Have I kept the issues of my heart in the means of grace, so as to profit by them?

8th.

8th. What have I done this day for the souls and bodies of God's dear saints?

9th. Have I laid out any thing to please myself, when I might have saved the money for the cause of God?

10th. Have I governed well my tongue this day, remembering that "in a multitude of words there wanteth not sin?"

11th. In how many instances have I denied myself this day?

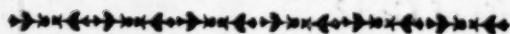
12th. Does my life and conversation adorn the gospel of Jesus Christ?

F I N I S.

B O O K S

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